



# THE CONNECTICUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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March 9, 2011

### Members of the Committee on Education:

My name is Dr. Virginia Shiller. I am a member of the Connecticut Psychological Association, CPA representative to the Advisory Committee of the Office of the Child Advocate, and a Clinical Instructor at the Yale Child Study Center. My testimony is in regards to Raised Bill No. S.B. 1138, "An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws."

I recognize that in this current budget environment, any additional expenditures must be scrutinized carefully. As this bill does require training of all school employees on the prevention of, and response to student bullying, training costs must be justified.

According to the publication "Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention" (A report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; <http://www.pluk.org/Pubs/Bullying2.pdf>), much of the cost of setting up of programs that have been proven to be successful can largely be covered by existing funding streams that already pay for the salaries of coordinators, counselors, and teachers, for whom this work becomes part of their jobs. School personnel currently must spend time dealing with bullying problems; however, they typically are not dealing with these problems in the most effective ways.

Good programs supported by research include a component of creating a "culture of kindness." By making it "not cool" to bully, and by encouraging bystanders to step in, school personnel do not need to spend as much time intervening with problems. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, which is discussed in the publication described above, is one such program.

I agree that cyberbullying should be included in the definition of bullying. This would allow students who experience cyberbullying, or parents who discover their child is being bullied through e-mails, instant messaging, text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones, web pages, web logs (blogs), chat rooms or discussion groups, and other information communication technologies, recourse to report the problem to schools. However, given that it can be very hard to detect cyberbullying and to discover the perpetrators, the most effective way to reduce cyberbullying is to establish good programs which use proven methods of increasing kindness and establishing an atmosphere in which bullying is not "cool."

Thank you for your time and consideration.